TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
REGARDING H.B. 5126
AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CHEMICAL INNOVATIONS INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT
March 1, 2010

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and members of the Environment Committee, my name is Daniel Csuka. I am a second year law student at the University of Connecticut School of Law, and I am here today as an intern with the Connecticut Public Health Association. The Connecticut Public Health Association is pleased to endorse House Bill No. 5126, which would establish a Chemical Innovations Institute at the University of Connecticut Health Center.

Most people cannot claim to have any direct evidence of being personally affected by the toxic chemicals present in the Connecticut environment, but studies suggest it is likely, and this disconnect is at the heart of the problem. For example, toxic chemicals have been associated with numerous reproductive health and fertility problems which are often devastating and emotionally taxing. Over the years, among other things, there has been a 40% increase in women reporting difficulty conceiving,[1] a significant decline in testosterone in men which cannot be explained by lifestyle factors or an increase in age,[2] and a decline in the sperm counts of men in multiple countries.[3] These days one would be hard-pressed to find someone who doesn't know even one person who has had trouble conceiving. It is hard for me to read these statistics and not question whether the increasing number of couples experiencing mental and emotional anguish is a result of an increase in exposure to chemicals.

As background, the federal law designed to regulate the manufacture and use of toxic chemicals has not been updated in over 30 years,[4] and as a result the EPA is able to require testing on only 200 of more than 30,000 chemicals produced and used in the United States.[5] A recently published report looked at numerous peer-reviewed articles and found overwhelming evidence suggesting that chemical exposures have contributed significantly to the rise in many chronic diseases.[6] It noted that "estimates of the proportion of the disease burden that can be attributed to chemicals vary widely, ranging from 1% of all disease to 5% of childhood cancer to 10% of

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[1] Anjani Chandra & Elizabeth Hervey Stephen, *Impaired Fecundity in the United States: 1982-1995*, 30 FAMILY PLANNING PERSPECTIVES 34 (1998).
[2] Thomas G. Travison, et al., *A Population-Level Decline in Serum Testosterone Levels in American Men*, 92 J. OF CLIN. ENDOCRINOLOGY & METABOLISM (2007).
[3] Shanna Swan, Eric P. Elkin, & Laura Fenster, *The Question of Declining Sperm Density Revisited: An Analysis of 101 Studies Published 1934–1996*, 108 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVES 961 (2000).
[4] Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, 15 U.S.C. § 2601 et seq. (1976).
[5] Testimony of Lisa P. Jackson (Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) before the Committee on Environment and Public Works 3 (Dec. 2, 2009), *available at* http://www.epa.gov/ocir/hearings/testimony/111_2009_2010/2009_1202_lpj.pdf
[6] Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families, A Health Case for Reforming the Toxic Substances Control Act (2010), *available at* http://healthreport.saferchemicals.org/.

diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and neurodevelopmental deficits to 30% of childhood asthma."[7] (*internal citations omitted*) While the federal government will have to take steps to amend the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, states cannot rely on this to happen any time soon and must begin to combat the prevalence of these deadly chemicals.

A Chemical Innovations Institute can be expected to benefit the state and its citizens in a myriad of ways. **First**, it will enable Connecticut to both contribute to and tap into similar programs in other states so that we may all share valuable resources while working towards mutual goals. The Toxic Use Reduction Institute at the University of Massachusetts (TURI) is one of these programs, and has experienced enormous success. One paper found that TURI "helped industry reduce the use of toxic chemicals by 40%, byproduct waste by 58%, and toxic emissions by 80%."[8] **Second**, the Institute would help businesses save money through the adoption of more efficient and safer processes that enable them to compete in markets like that of Europe with more stringent chemicals regulations. The same paper remarks that TURI saved companies a total of $14 million so far.[9] **Third**, the most obvious benefit would be a reduction in health care costs associated with chronic diseases. Beginning with the Institute, if such programs lead to even a .1% reduction of health care costs nationally, direct medical savings in Connecticut would exceed $50 million each year.[10] This sum does not include the many other kinds of savings specific to individuals, such as those raising children with severe learning disabilities. **Fourth**, it would generate safe, green jobs. **Fifth**, and most importantly, the Institute would do all of these things without requiring the state to put forth any money at all. Even if the federal government doesn't provide money for the project, there are many other sources of funding which could be explored, including the Donaghue Foundation, the UConn Foundation, outreach to businesses that would benefit most, and the federal Green Jobs Initiative.

For the above reasons, the Connecticut Public Health Association supports House Bill No. 5126, and recommends the development of a Chemical Innovations Institute so that Connecticut may become a pioneer in the field of toxic chemical reduction and a new, greener economy.

CPHA wishes to thank the Committee for its invaluable leadership in addressing environmental issues as they relate to the public health needs of Connecticut's citizens. I appreciate the opportunity to address these issues and am happy to answer any questions you might have.

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[7] *Id.* at 3.
[8] Beverley Thorpe & Mark Rossi, Louisville Charter for Safer Chemicals, Require Safer Substitutes and Solutions (2005), *available at* http://www.louisvillecharter.org/paper.substitutes.shtml.
[9] *Id.* at 5.
[10] Press Release, Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut, Moving Beyond Toxic Chemical "Whac-A-Mole," Jan. 21, 2010, *available at* http://safehealthyct.org/documents/Health_report_release_1_21_10.pdf.